

## Book Review

**Essentials of autopsy practice. Current methods and modern trends, Guy N. Ruttly (Ed.), Springer (2006). Price £90, 245 pp., ISBN: 1-85233-967-5**

When I was asked to review this book for the Journal of Forensic & Legal Medicine I was pleased to discover this was a book I would in all probability have bought anyway. I can report my anticipation was not ill placed and I was not disappointed by its content. This book is the third in a series of books which do not claim to be a totally comprehensive overview of all aspects of autopsy practice, but instead a series of invited articles covering recent advances in this area. To this end the articles drawn from authors from the UK, USA, Germany, France and Australia deal with their chosen areas, many of which are common yet controversial areas of practise, in more detail than more standard texts. The editor is a practising Home Office Pathologist, based in Leicester, and this is reflected in the fact the articles are of practical use to hospital pathologists as well as forensic pathologists in addition to providing a theoretical background. The articles entitled respectively "Post Mortem Analysis for Inherited Ion Channelopathies", "Pathology of Sepsis" and "Chest and Abdominal Injuries" would be of use to these groups both at trainee level and consultant level. The latter two articles cover areas that are commonly encountered yet can pose difficulties in interpretation and outline an approach when faced with these two potentially problematical areas, including advice on possible pitfalls. The articles entitled respectively "The Evolution of the Nurse's Role in Death Investigation" and "Injuries and Death Resulting from Restraint" would certainly be of interest to a wider group including Forensic Physicians, Forensic Nurses, Coroners, Coroner's Officers and Police in routine practice. Anyone taking part 1 and 2 of the Diploma of Medical Jurisprudence or the Diploma of Forensic Medical Sciences or equivalent would find the above together with the chapters on timing of death, burn injury and subdural haematoma in children essential reading.

The article on restraint death is comprehensive and covers agitated delirium and a section on deaths in schizophrenia. It starts with an overview of physical, chemical, electrical injuries and restraint/asphyxial death and then an approach at post mortem with advice on interpretation. The article entitled "The Evolution of the Nurse's Role in Death Investigation" reviews the role of nurses in death investigation in other countries and proposes greater involvement in coronial and police custodial work in this

country as well as an overview of death investigation frameworks around the world. The article entitled "Post-mortem Analysis for Inherited Ion Channelopathies" summarises an approach to autopsy and genetic testing in young people dying of sudden suspected cardiac death and outlines the common genetic causes of sudden cardiac deaths. The article "Subdural Haematoma in Children" provides a comprehensive differential diagnosis in ages from foetal to juveniles and then deals with traumatic causes in more detail. The articles on "The Timing of Death" and "Burn Injury" respectively are good detailed comprehensive reviews of their chosen subject. The article entitled "A Histopathologists Guide to Ocular Pathology" is more specialist, but is a well laid out comprehensive article on how to remove and examine the eye at post mortem and advice on cosmetic reconstruction as well as how to interpret traumatic injuries. It touches on X-ray, photography, legal/ethical issues in relation to the eye as well as sampling of the vitreous humour at post mortem, indications for and limitations of this technique.

This book therefore contains articles which would as stated on the cover, be of interest to nurses, lawyers, paramedics and police officers as well as Pathologists. The book is hard-back and appears robust with good print and page quality with well set out headings including a useful introduction at the start and then summary at the end of each article. The photographs are black and white and are of overall good quality and relevance as are the diagrams and tables. There is little in the way of typographical errors (I found only one). The articles all appear well referenced. To summarise this is a book I enjoyed reading and as a practicing hospital pathologist and forensic physician, I feel this book has relevance to both groups as well as other personnel involved in death investigation. Anyone taking a post graduate forensic examination qualification would be well advised to have read this book. Having recently taken the Diploma of Medical Jurisprudence (Clinical) relatively late in my career, four out of the nine articles would have been highly relevant to answering recent questions in this examination.

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